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ABSTRACT

The Pupil Observations Survey Report (POSR), a 38-item rating scale, was administered to pupils of 26 female student teachers in secondary schools. Social class origin of the teachers was assessed using the short form of the McGuire-White Index of Social Status. Pupil social class was operationally defined in terms of the social class of the neighborhood from which pupils were drawn. Pupils' POSR responses were factor analyzed using Kaiser's varimax rotation technique and yielded nine orthogonal factors. The factor scores of 128 pupils--seven males and seven female randomly chosen from each of eight classes evenly divided between lower and middle class--were submitted to analysis using a triple classification analysis of variance design. Results showed the female pupils tended to perceive teachers as more confident or poised. Middle class pupils rated teachers as more pleasant and effective than did lower class pupils. Lower class pupils tended to like teachers in personal terms more than did middle class pupils. Lower class pupils tended to perceive all teachers as more authoritarian. Lower class teachers were evaluated as more authoritarian by all pupils but especially by lower class pupils. Pupils seemed to prefer a teacher of a different social class except in evaluation reflecting effective communication. There, teachers of the same social class as pupils were rated higher. [Related document is ED 028 148.] (Author/RT)

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Influence of Social Class on Students' Evaluations of Their Teachers

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Studies of teacher effectiveness that include pupil evaluations as criteria frequently attempt to determine the structure of student attitudes toward teachers (Gupta, 1960; Solomon, Bezdick, & Rosenberg, 1964; Wright & Sherman, 1965). Most have attempted to conceptualize the structure of pupil's reactions, assuming that pupil reaction is a function of teacher behavior. The present investigation has made no such assumption but rather has attempted to determine the influence of a particular characteristic, social class, on pupil reactions.

METHOD

The Pupil Observation Survey Report, a 38-item rating scale instrument, was administered to the pupils of 26 female student teachers in secondary schools. Social class origin of the teachers was assessed using the short form of the McGuire-White Index of Social Status. From these teachers, 15 were selected for a larger study (Jackson, 1966) investigating effects of teacher social class, teacher ability, and pupil sex on pupil evaluation. Pupils' (=210) POSR responses were factor analyzed using Kaiser's varimax rotation technique and yielded nine orthogonal factors whose items seemed to represent Pleasant, Effective (I); Confidence (II); Student Likes Teacher (III); Communication (IV); Subject Matter Competence (V); Authoritarian (VI); Student-Centered (VII); Directive (VIII); Happy (IX).

Pupil Social class was operationally defined in terms of the social class of the neighborhood from which pupils were drawn. Of the 15 secondary school classes, 4 composed of lower-class children and 4 composed of middle-class children were selected so that classes were balanced for teacher and pupil social class. Fourteen (7 male and 7 female) pupils' responses were randomly chosen from each of these 8 classes. The factor scores of these 128 pupils were submitted to analysis using a triple classification analysis of variance design.

RESULTS

Significant differences in pupils' evaluations related to pupil sex occurred only in females' ratings on Factor II (Confidence) when compared with those of males', female pupils rating teachers more confident than

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male pupils. (Mean factor score of males = -.149, females = .315; F = 6.82, $p < .05$.) Additional findings are summarized in Table 1.

Middle-class pupils evaluated teachers significantly higher on Factor I (Pleasant-Effective) than did lower-class pupils ($F = 9.75$, $p < .01$). Lower-class pupils rated teachers significantly higher on Factor III (Student Likes Teacher), $F = 5.41$, $p < .05$. This was a more personal factor than Factor I. Lower-class pupils also rated teachers higher on Factor VI (Authoritarian) than did middle-class pupils ($F = 7.39$, $p < .01$). Lower-class teachers were evaluated as significantly more authoritarian by all pupils than were middle-class teachers ($F = 16.54$, $p < .001$).

Significant interaction effects between teacher and pupil class were found on Factors I, Pleasant-Effective; IV, Communication; and VI, Authoritarian. Rated from high to low on Factor I (Pleasant-Effective) were (a) lower-class teachers by middle-class pupils; (b) middle-class teachers by lower-class pupils; (c) middle-class teachers by middle-class pupils; and (d) lower-class teachers by lower-class pupils ($F = 17.72$, $p < .001$). Rated highest to lowest on Factor VI (Authoritarian) were (a) lower-class teachers by lower-class pupils; (b) lower-class teachers by middle-class pupils; (c) middle-class teachers by lower-class pupils; and (d) middle-class teachers by middle-class pupils ($F = 5.86$, $p < .05$). Evaluated from highest to lowest on Factor IV (Communication) were (a) middle-class teachers by middle-class pupils; (b) lower-class teachers by lower-class pupils; (c) lower-class teachers by middle-class pupils; and (d) middle-class teachers by lower-class pupils ($F = 10.42$, $p < .01$).

In summary, female pupils in this sample tended to perceive the teacher as more confident or poised. Middle-class pupils rated teachers as more pleasant and effective than did lower-class pupils. However, lower-class pupils tended to like their teachers in personal terms more than did middle-class pupils. Lower-class pupils also tended to perceive all teachers as more authoritarian. Lower-class teachers were evaluated more authoritarian by all pupils but particularly by lower-class pupils. In general, pupils seemed to prefer a teacher of a different social class except in evaluations reflecting effective communication, where teachers of the same social class as pupils were rated higher by their pupils.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings are consistent with research in psychotherapy indicating that communication is facilitated between individuals with similar social-class background (Hollingshead & Redlich, 1953). It is also consistent with conclusions from social psychological research supporting the hypothesis that lower-class families are more constituted along authoritarian lines than are middle-class families, a perception which lower-class children may transfer to the public school classroom (Bronfenbrenner, 1958).

Table I

Means of Significantly Different POSR Factor Scores
for Middle- and Lower-Class Teachers

POSR FACTOR	Teacher Class	PUPIL CLASS		ALL	F	P
		Middle	Lower			
I (Not) Pleasant Effective	Middle	.194	-.001			
	Lower	-.573	.740		17.722	.0001
	ALL	-.190	.370		9.755	.0023
III Student Likes Teacher	All	-.150	.296		5.417	.0219
IV Communication	Middle	.306	-.620			
	Lower	.024	.288		10.420	.0017
VI (Not) Authoritarian	Middle	.401	.345			
	Lower	.095	-.861		5.868	.0171
	All	.248	-.258		7.395	.0077
	Middle			.373		
	Lower			-.383	16.544	.0001

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